{ See Note at end. }

UNITY

CHURCH-DOOR PULPIT,

FOR

FREEDOM, FELLOWSHIP AND CHARACTER IN RELIGION.

Series 1. Chicago, March 23, 1885. No. 20.

THE ONE RELIGION.

By PROF. C. C. EVERETT, Dean of Harvard Divinity School, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

EPHESIANS IV, 5: "One Faith."

How many religions are there in the world?

At this question we should perhaps begin to reckon up one religion after another. We should say, There is the Mohammedan religion, and the religion of the Brahmans, that of the Chinese, and that of the heathen who worship idols of wood and stone; and above all there is the Christian religion, the best and the noblest of all. Perhaps we might even name in our answer the different forms of the Christian religion. We might say: There is the faith of the Catholic, and of the Protestant, and so on through all the innumerable sects that divide and break up Christendom. We should, perhaps, at first thought, unite in regard to this manifoldness of religion, and might differ only as to the number of the religions that we should include in our estimate.

If, however, it should be stated that there is but one religion in the world, this statement would also be generally accepted. There would be a look of intelligence on many faces, a look of satisfaction and self-content, as one and another would respond, "Yes, there is but one religion in the world and that is ours." The Mohammedan would cry, "Yes, there is one religion; God is God and Mohammed is His prophet;" and thus from every side we should have a like response: there is but one religion, and that is ours. It is the confidence that there is but one religion and that this is the religion of the body to which the individual who is making the claim chances to belong, which has introduced so much bitterness and narrowness into life. The separation between one religious faith and another has seemed to cut down deep, and make a complete isolation of life from life. As the Chinese build a wall about themselves, and look upon their country as the central flowery and celestial nation, and all outside of this as outside barbarians, so do different bodies of believers, one holding, as we say, one religion and another another, separate themselves. The Mohammedan speaks of the Christian as a Christian dog. The Christian speaks contemptuously of the Mohammedan as an infidel. And Christian sects bandy among themselves the words heretic and infidel, and the words are felt to mark a chasm as wide as that which separates earth from heaven. It is no

wonder that many, seeing this bitterness and this self-assertion, this contempt and this hate, should doubt whether there is any religion, whether all are not alike deluded or deluding; should maintain that at least all religions are alike, so that it is no matter which of them a man accepts. "One is as good as another. For the present all is uncertainty. In this Babel of voices we cannot tell who is right and who is wrong. There may be a truth somewhere; meanwhile we must wait."

I believe that, in a sense different from any that has yet been referred to, there is one religion in the world, and one only: one faith, and one only. But to reach this thought we must move carefully. We must have our conception of religion clear. We should know just what we mean by the words we use. We must, in the first place, separate in our mind religion from theology. When we speak of religion we are very apt to mean theology, and when we think of religion we are very apt to think of theology. Religion is one. But there are many theologies. Religion is everywhere the same, theology is everywhere different.

I may perhaps best make this truth clear by comparing the relation of religion to theology, with that of the air to the atmosphere. In our common speech we use very often the words air and atmosphere, as if they meant the same thing. Or rather, perhaps I should say that, while we rarely use the word atmosphere, we use in its stead the word air. Thus we say that the air is heavy or light. We say that in such a place the air is healthy, in such another it is unhealthy. We speak of mountain air, of sea air, of country air. We say that the air of a swampy region is malarious. We say that the night air is injurious. It would perhaps surprise many to be told that the air is everywhere the same, that it may be indeed denser or rarer, that it may be more pure or less pure, but that the air, as such, is absolutely invariable. By night and by day, by the sea shore or in the region of swamps, in the city and in the country, in Europe, Asia, Africa and America, and far out in the midst of the almost boundless reaches of the ocean, the air is everywhere the same. It has its fixed chemical combination. It contains here and everywhere eight parts of oxygen by weight to twenty-eight of nitrogen. This combination of these elements in this proportion never changes. It is as fixed, as permanent and as equal as any other chemical product. But, on the other hand, the atmosphere is always changing. It is different in the night from what it is in the day time. It is different on one day from what it was on another, in one region from what it is in another. It is different in America from what it is in Europe or Africa. It differs in the city and in the country, by the seashore and among the swamps. The atmosphere is the air, together with whatever exhalations from the earth are mingled with it. The atmosphere takes up everything: it takes the vapor from the sea, it takes the malaria from the swamps; it takes the sweetness of the flowers and the corruption of decay, it takes the carbon from combustion and from the breath of all living creatures. The air may form sometimes only a small part of the atmosphere. Sometimes it may be almost excluded by it. Gases and vapors and smoke may take its place and banish it.

Now precisely like this relation of the air to the atmosphere is the relation of religion to theology. Religion is often spoken of when we mean theology, just as we often speak of the air when we mean the atmosphere. But like the air, religion is everywhere the same and has always been the same from the beginning. It may be more or less pure, but the difference is only between more or less. Its peculiar elements and their relations are always the same. I do not say merely that they ought to be the same, but they are the same. There is one religion and one faith. On the other hand, theology is continually changing. It is different in one region from what it is in another. It is different in one time from what it is in another. It differs in different communities, in different circumstances.

What makes the difference between theology and religion is that precisely

which makes the difference between the atmosphere and the air. Theology also is full of exhalations from the world. It takes up the faults, the prejudices, the imperfections of our lower life. It is made foul by human passion. It takes up into itself the malarious breath of old traditions that have been left like pools or swamps after the living waters that have brought them have passed away, and they remain stagnant and corrupt.

Thus analyze the theology of a time or community and you will find the traditions, the prejudices that prevail there, mingled with more or less religion. But analyze religion and it is everywhere the same.

Theology, like the atmosphere, may be sometimes health giving, or it may breed even death. Religion, like the air, can bring only life. For religion is the natural and simple trust of the soul in a power of good over it and about it, and its right relation to this; and theology is the reasoning, the theories, systems, the conjectures, the traditions that have gathered about this, sometimes making it clear, sometimes making it obscure.

When I say that there is but one religion, I mean that there is but one central religious truth, and this finds itself expressed with more or less clearness, with more or less purity, with more or less contradiction, in all forms of religion that are worthy of the name. This one religious truth is the goodness of God and the confidence that man may place in this for life and for death. There is no form of religion, there is no theology worthy of the name, that does not express this with more or less consistency or contradiction. This truth is the utterance of religious faith. It is the one faith that is common to all religious souls. Theology is the result of human reason, human invention, of human prejudice, of human superstition, or of human tradition. It may contain things that are utterly at variance with a true religious faith. It constructs its own theory of God's methods. It forms its own schemes to represent man's relation to Him. It may say with religion that God is good, and then it may go on to affirm things in regard to him which are inconsistent with all possible goodness. One theology makes one such scheme, and another theology another. Thus theologies differ; they contend; they excite hatreds and enmities, but religion is always one, is always at peace. Thus while there are many theologies, there is but one religion and one faith.

I have said that the one religious faith affirms the goodness of God and the trust that men may put in it for life and for death. We should have in our minds and hearts the knowledge and the feeling that the word faith when applied to religion can mean nothing else than this. The word faith has its meaning like every other word, and in every day life we always use it in this one sense and in no other. The theologies play with the word. They twist it and force it to their own ends. But the word faith on simple lips has one simple meaning. The meaning of the word faith is *confidence* and no man can imagine himself as using the word in any simple human relation, in any other sense. You say that you have faith in a man's honesty, but you could not say that you have faith in his dishonesty. You may believe that he is dishonest, but that belief you would not express by the word faith. If a friend is sick you may have faith that he will recover. You could not say that you have faith that he will not recover, however much you might fear it, or however strongly you might believe it. So in a storm at sea, you might have faith in the strength of your vessel; you could not have faith in its weakness. Faith, we read, is the substance of things *hoped for*, and you cannot use the word, and in human life you would not think of using the word, in regard to anything that is not an object of hope.

Now the theologies of the world affirm many things that cannot be objects of faith. They may be believed, but the word faith could not properly be used with reference to them. One may have faith in the authority that teaches them, but the doctrines themselves cannot be held as matters of faith. The doctrine of total

depravity cannot be an object of faith. One may believe it, but faith is not the word by which this belief could properly be expressed. One may have faith in God's justice, but the doctrines that make an awful caricature of this justice cannot be objects of *faith*. As the word gospel means good news and no bad news can be called gospel, so faith means belief in the good, and no belief in anything that is not good can be called faith; for I repeat, the word faith means *confidence*. It will be a great help to us if we can naturally, spontaneously, almost instinctively attach this meaning to the word *faith* whenever we hear it and whenever we use it. It would be a thread to guide us through many a labyrinth of speculation, through many a maze of doctrine. Thus the word *faith* implies a wholeness, a heathfulness, an elasticity, a confidence, a hope. Thus we understand how there is and can be only one faith in the world; and if there is but one faith, there is corresponding with this but one religion. This religion is faith in the good God and love of him, and obedience to him, and love of his children.

The theologies may contradict this very religion which is their starting point. They may belie this faith; but it is this one religion that unites all religious souls together into one.

When men talk theology, they differ; when they talk religion they agree. And it is beautiful to see how in all moments of exaltation, in the grand crises which bring out the real emotions of the heart, in moments of common sorrow, or common peril, the language of theology is forgotten, its discord ceases, and the common language of religion expresses the common emotions of all hearts. Men may pray theology, they may sing theology; but true prayers and true hymns express only the one faith of all souls. The skylark, they say, builds his nest low down upon the earth; but when he sings, he leaves his nest and soars far up into the sky, till he is almost lost in the blueness and becomes only an invisible song. So many a spirit builds its nest down in the dark places of the earth. It bring together thorns and briers and mud, and weaves of them its nest, or it finds some such nest of thorns and clay that some other has constructed before it and takes possession of it. That is its nest, its theologic resting place. But when it sings, it leaves its nest, like the skylark. It soars in the ecstasy of prayer and praise, and one would never suspect as its notes fall from the Heavens, where its nest is, or what it is made of. Take for instance our hymn-book. It is pleasant to look over the index and see the names that are grouped there —Thoreau, Wesley, and Watts, and Parker, and Doddridge, and Madam Guyon. There are hymns from the Lyra Catholica, the Breviary, from the Christian Examiner; and from the Moravian, from the Wesleyan, the Episcopalian, the Methodist collections; Luther, Cowper, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Furness, Clarke and innumerable others meet there. They represent all creeds, all forms of belief. If these writers could meet and begin to talk theology together, what a jargon there would be. But these theologies are only their nests, far down among the thorns often, and amid the shadows. But here they have left their nests. They are song birds only. As they soar they sing. The Heavens are full of music. There is no discord and no variance. Their songs are one, for they utter *the one faith*.

In how many cases does the process of admitting members into the church consist in taking them down into the shadows and saying: "When you build nests for yourselves, you must build them in this way, out of thorns and mud, or here are some old ones that will answer your purpose just as well."

I once saw an old volume which occurs to me as representing better than anything I can think of the contradiction that often exists between theology and religion. It was a book describing the sufferings of the lost. Each sense had a chapter given it to show how each sense would have its torments. The tortures which Nero and other cruel tyrants inflicted were described with terrible minuteness; but these, the book said, were nothing to the sufferings of the lost; for these tyrants were finite, but God is Infinite. But each chapter was fol-

lowed by a prayer, a prayer to the Infinite Love; a prayer full of faith and sweetness and tenderness. It seemed impossible that the two forms of utterance should stand in one book, should be the expression of one man. But in one the head spoke, and in the other the heart; in the one theology, and in the other religion.

It is a grand and helpful truth that we have thus considered. It is grand and helpful to hear sometimes the one song that all religious souls are uttering with one voice. Each mingles with this more or less of discord. Each adds to it something that is foreign to it, often something that contradicts it, but the starting point is the same:

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow."

So far all religious souls can go together; so far the religion that is in all souls can go. Then may follow something about the Trinity or some other theologic conception, that may stop the lips of one and another. This is the separation of theology; but so far as religion goes we are one.

You will not understand me that it is no matter what form of religion we accept, any more than when I said that the air was a simple chemical result, everywhere the same, you would understand me that it is no matter what air we breathe. We need pure air, and we need pure religion. The body can live in spite of much vitiation of its air and the soul can live in spite of much impurity in its religion. But the best is to have the purest of each.

The one religion—that is what Jesus prayed in the Lord's prayer. It is what he preached in the sermon on the Mount. It is what he uttered in parables by the sea or in familiar talk by the wayside.

The one religion. This is what sustains the mourner in her sorrow, the sufferer in his pain, the strong in his struggles after the highest life, the weak in his helplessness. Each thinks that it is his peculiar theology that helps him. It is not his peculiar theology; it is the religion that is common to all. Well for us is it, if we can utter this pure religion with our lips without impure admixture; better for us if we can feel it in our hearts, and live it in our lives. For men's theology they may leave behind them in the church; but their religion is nothing if it does not go forth with them out of doors, and work with them on the street, and rest with them in their homes.

Our "Church-Door Pulpit" hints its purpose in its name. It aims to furnish fortnightly a transfigured tract,—transfigured by being paid for, and by representing not so much a given system of beliefs as the emphasis, in somewhat varying beliefs, on "Freedom, Fellowship and Character in Religion;" this tract to be taken from the rack or table at the church-door to the home, there to serve its little mission by reading in the family, lending to a neighbor, mailing to a distant friend, etc. We hope the plan may be destined to wide adoption by Liberal churches as part of their regular church-work.

The word "UNITY" in the title bears to the Committee who arrange the series a wide meaning, pointing more to the substance, than to the forms, of religious thought and faith; and in inviting contributions they have sought, not only through the whole range, but in both directions beyond the range, of those who bear the "Unitarian" name,—though most of the writers must naturally be found within that name. "New Orthodoxy," "New Judaism," those who care for no name but "Religion," and the "Ethical Societies," will all be represented. The choice of subject is left to the writers; and *each writer is responsible for his own utterance alone, and for nothing else in the series.* "One of your best—a life-helping sermon, or a thought-sermon reaching the life," was the invitation sent out.

*** Published Semi-Monthly (except during July and August), by The Colegrove Book Co., 135 Wabash Ave., Chicago, Ill. Ten copies or more to one address, each, 50 cts. a year. Single copy, One year, $1.00. Entered at the Chicago Post-office as second-class matter.

PROSPECTUS.

I am preparing for the press, and expect to isssue about May 1, a volume of poems selected from those published in *Unity* between December, 1879, and the present date. It will include about seventy-five poems from the following authors: James Vila Blake, Alice Williams Brotherton, Edwin G. Brown, Benjamin R Bulkeley, Fanny Driscoll, Samuel Baxter Foster, Abbie M. Gannett, William C. Gannett, Ella A. Giles, Florence Tyng Griswold, Hattie Tyng Griswold, Frederick L. Hosmer, Lily A. Long, William S. Lord, Miss J. E. McCaine, Emma Endicott Marean, Mary W. Plummer, Mrs. E. C. Potter, Minnie S. Savage, J. N. Sprigg, Ella F. Stevens, Jabez T. Sunderland, Harriet S. Tolman, John Tunis, James H. West, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Celia P. Woolley.

The book will be an 18mo. of 160 pages, printed on heavy paper with wide margin, cloth bound, with gilt top and half-trimmed edges.

The price of the book after publication will be $1.25; to those ordering copies in advance it will be $1. Persons who may desire copies will greatly oblige me if they will fill out the subjoined blank and return to me *soon*.

Respectfully,

CHARLES H. KERR.

135 Wabash Ave., Chicago, March 23, 1885.

CHARLES H. KERR,

135 Wabash Ave., Chicago:

I agree to take ..... *copy (copies) of your forthcoming volume of poems from "Unity," at One Dollar each.*

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Date ..... *1885.*

ORDER BLANK FOR BLOCK-SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Ten copies or more to one address, each 50 cents a year.

THE COLEGROVE BOOK CO.,

135 Wabash Ave., Chicago:

I subscribe for ..... *copies of the Second Series of Unity Church-Door Pulpit (twenty numbers), to be addressed as follows:*

Name .....

.....

.....

Date ..... *1885.*

ORDER BLANK FOR INDIVIDUAL SUBSCRIBERS.

THE COLEGROVE BOOK CO.,

135 Wabash Ave., Chicago:

Enclosed find One Dollar, for which you will send the Second Series of Unity Church-Door Pulpit (twenty numbers), to the following address:

Name .....

No ..... *St.,*

Post-office .....

Date ..... *1885.* *State* .....

UNITY SUBSCRIPTION BLANK.

THE COLEGROVE BOOK CO.,

135 Wabash Ave., Chicago:

Enclosed find One Dollar and Fifty Cents ($1.50), for which you will send Unity *for one year, beginning with* ....., *1885, to the following address:*

Name .....

No ..... *St.,*

Post-office .....

Date ..... *1885.* *State* .....

THE "CHURCH-DOOR PULPIT"

NEW FURNISHED FOR NEXT YEAR.

The second year of the "CHURCH DOOR PULPIT" begins in April, and the preachers that are to preach the fortnightly sermon in it are gathering. The series of twenty sermons will differ from last year's in two respects. Four numbers will be devoted respectively to

Channing, Parker, Emerson, Martineau,

giving a score or two of what in each writer may be called his "*Gospel passages.*" If one would learn in short space for what the four great prophets of our Liberal Faith stand, let him read these numbers; and keep them on hand to give a friend. If these four pamphlets do not furnish "Scripture readings" for the *pulpit* also, it will be a surprise.

In three more numbers the subjects

"God," "Miracles," "The Bible,"

will be [illegible]tively treated in extracts from several writers. Each of these three pamphlets will be, as it were, a [illegible]l of short liberal tracts on its special subject.

The [illegible] thirteen numbers will probably be single sermons from as many preachers,—preachers ranging [illegible] thought from Liberal Orthodoxy to the Society for Ethical Culture; most of them finding a home, t[illegible]e, under the Unitarian name. To announce the broad religious fellowship, the "unity without unifor[illegible] of faith, implied in such pulpit comradeship,—to announce and emphasize and further that, is one [illegible]e for which the CHURCH-DOOR PULPIT as well as UNITY was started; it is one purpose which itself starte[illegible]tarianism." The independence of each writer is guarded by the note printed on his sermon, that [illegible]esponsible for his own alone and for nothing else in the series. So far as those invited have been he[illegible]n and decided on, the list, alphabetically arranged, stands now:

Hosmer F. L.
176 Euclid Ave

Felix Adle[illegible]	**Rowland Connor,**	**Andrew P. Peabody,**
Phillips Br[illegible]	**Washington Gladden,**	**Minot J. Savage,**
John W. Chadwick,	**John C. Learned,**	**John Snyder,**

The hope is that our churches, West and East, will catch the new church-habit, to *regularly and freely furnish forth a table or shelf near the door with such pamphlets*, first for home reading and then for lending and mailing, *each reader becoming his own missionary society for whatever he finds worthy.* It is found that a minute's "prelude" from the minister, describing the "Church-Door" sermon for the day and its preacher, interests the people in it and him, and usually causes the table to be swept of its thirty, forty, or fifty copies. But much of the people's interest depends upon this prelude-habit. To make his dumb colleague do good work the minister must treat him heartily.

Of course some of the sermons will be more liked than others, and be better fitted for mission service. If now and then, among the twenty, one contradicts words spoken at the other end of the church, what then? The note on each pamphlet explains the matter; and, if necessary, the "prelude" can explain it farther. But it should be remembered that these sermons, departing somewhat from our thought, are the very ones which best preach our Gospel of Religious Fellowship, which show we *mean* it.

In this way nearly 30,000 "Church-Door Pulpit" sermons have been distributed more or less widely this past year, mainly in the west. Probably nothing like so many tracts could have been circulated here in any other way. And probably no better way can be devised of making each church, east and west, a little "Propaganda" society of our Faith and Principles. Everybody knows *one* person who would like to read what *he* likes. Anybody will hand or mail one tract. And this local and post-office Propaganda is much more likely to enlist members and interest the church at large, if the work is allowed to cost them a trifle than if it costs them nothing. A tract *paid for* is almost redeemed! Paid for by one of its receivers and onspeeders instead of by some Society, it is "twice blessed,—it blesseth him that gives and him that takes."

Each church that subscribes $25 for a block of fifty copies and uses them thoroughly through individual readers, as here suggested, besides any good done in its own homes, sends out twenty times fifty, or one thousand tracts a year, to spread the Liberal Faith—a little mission well worth adding regularly to any church-life.

Will those who think that such a series of twenty pamphlets, as is here described, promises good pocket and post-office preaching, at once send in their subscriptions for the coming year?

Single subscription for the year, 20 numbers, $1.

Block subscriptions for ten or more copies to one address, 50 cents each copy.

Send to C. H. KERR,

UNITY OFFICE, 135 WABASH AVENUE, CHICAGO, ILL.